/38 cont./

164 85. Just like the foregoing is the utopia of those who imagine the Indians absolutely exempt from sickness and only infected by contact with our civilization. Nothing could be less correct. Unfortunately, the Indians know through sad experience an infinity of endemic diseases. In addition to the generic parán and emorón, being ill or feeling bad, they call by their own names the chills of malarial fever (e-komi-ma), measles (apikoroimá), smallpox (apotoimá), dysentery (kuasuk and uenarok), diarrhea with blood (muenimá), whooping cough and other coughs (arautaimá), tuberculosis (apueká), the common cold (atón), anchylostomiasis (motó, poriké, etc.), swelling of the arm (achín and yeuán muré), biliousness (e-ve-piká), blindness (enumí), and even venereal diseases in general (samoroní). All these words are not foreign or brought in, which indicates with considerable likeliness that the diseases that they denote were not either.

Concerning these diseases, Father Las Casas himself, who was not in the least suspicious when stating something against the Indians, says that the natives of the Antilles confessed to him that those illnesses were /39/ already known among them before Christians came to their lands.

278 86. But, at least, it will be said, are not these Indians perfect herbists, with a knowledge of an infinite number of plants and their curative properties? This is, as well, a gratuitous and false supposition.

87. It is true that the Indians know an infinite number of plants; and there is no doubt that, given their talent for observation and their intimate contact with the other kingdoms of nature, they would have discovered many of the therapeutic properties of plants if medicine had been for them something separate from magic and sickness something apart from the maleficent influence of occult beings. But the opposite occurred: imagination sidetracked their observation and animism diverted them from physicism.

Hunting

/82 cont./

and fishing equipment: bow and arrows, blowgun and quiver, traps and nets, harpoon and hook. Poisons for the same: curare and several kinds of Verbascum. Culinary equipment: grater, manioc strainer, a fine sieve, baking pan, small mats, ollas, large wide-mouthed jars for catching rain, and mixing bowls. Ranchos or temporary dwellings and houses of fixed location: the former rectangular and the latter circular with conical roofs. Items of clothing and adornment: loincloths, feminine guayucos, moriche /palm/ sandals, wrist and ankle rings, garters, foliage coverings /pampanillas/, halos, necklaces and earrings; hammocks, bags, and straps for carrying children. Their household items: small benches, pothooks, camazas /large gourd dishes/, awls, guayares, and an infinity of baskets. Their instruments of navigation: paddle and pole, balsas and canoes made from tree trunks or with their bark /concha/ only. Their textiles: with the spindle, fibers twisted upon the thigh, other braided fibers and small weavings done on rudimentary looms. Their musical instruments: timbrels, whistles /pipes/, flutes, war trumpets /botutos/, and drums. Their agricultural cultivations: yucca, plantains, maize, cane, ají, auyama /gourd plant/, cotton, tobacco, and various sorts of tubers. The preparation of foodstuffs: boiled and roasted food, cassava and mañoco /maize flour/ ground in a mortar, guarapos /sugar-cane juice/ and purées, fermented and nonfermented. Etc., etc.

179. It should be made clear that these Indians for many generations have, through other neighboring intermediary tribes, been obtaining some instruments of our European civilization: knives, machetes, chícoras, axes, fishhooks, firearms, files, mirrors, glass beads, cloth for loincloths /guayucos/. But they still remember a time when they used to make their loincloths and straps for carrying children from the bark of special trees; when they made their fishhooks with thorns from plants or barbs from fish; when they made their arrows with tips of bone, wood, or a special cane; when they used dextrales (stone

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VENEZUELA

THE KAMAINO (OMENS) OF THE PEMON INDIANS

The following article is by the Capuchin missionary Fray Cesáreo de Armellada who forms part of the Mission to which the Venezuelan government has entrusted the care of various Indian groups of the states of Zulia and Bolivar. The author has dedicated himself to the compilation and study of the "oral literature" of the *Pemon* Indians since 1931. Various of his works have been published previously in this *Boletin*.

In studying the mentality of these *Pemón* Indians, we come up against this word *Kamainó* which literally means "he who or that which means", and which in use is equivalent to our "oracle" and "omen". For them, our futures are present times which keep approaching until they are before our eyes; but sharp-sighted eyes or an oracle can go forward to meet them like a bird, who soaring at a certain altitude sees coming what we yet cannot see.

The spirit liberated from the body during a dream (according to their belief) and the *piache* when he is in a trance and also free from the bodily enclosure through the use of vegetable drugs, are the great *kamainó* or oracles. And dreams should be considered as the commonest omens or predictions. Dreams are always interpreted on the basis of similarity, which is the great principle and the great error of these Indians: to think that the similar has an effect upon the similar (e. g., a leaf shaped like a deer's ear, into the deer); that the name and the image are the thing named or represented not only in language or in art, but also in the field of chance; that sickness of one member of the family will necessarily and physiologically have a repercussion on all of the relatives, etc.

Here we limit our study to certain natural occurrences which many times we have heard the *Pemón* Indians interpret as omens or warnings of things that are going to happen. I have always asked, how can a spider know this, how can a chicken know more than we do. And the answer were always the same: "truly it is strange, but so it is".

The principal *kamainó*, heard interpreted as omens by the Indians during the years of our stay among them, are:

[R72 contains no English TEXT--Analyst]

411 of arrows used by related tribes that I did not see among the Kamarakotos and
171 that my informants did not know: an arrow with a heavy, blunt wooden point used to stun birds, an arrow with a trident point used to shoot fish (for this and the last see Koch-Grünberg, Taurepán specimens, Vol. III, Plate 14, and Roth 1924, Figs. 52, 54), and one with a detachable poisoned wooden point
[208] (Makuchi and Waiwai, Farabee, Plate XXXIII). The Kamarakotos never use poison (curare) on arrows to be shot with a bow.

411 The use of steel points is, of course, post-Columbian and comparison
177 with related tribes shows that they have replaced bone and wooden (especially bamboo) points. There is no evidence that this tribe or any close relatives ever used stone arrow points and I have not been able to learn that any have been found in Venezuelan Guayana, although stone axes have. Stone spear (not arrow) points apparently occurred at least among more distantly related tribes. The Kamarakotos do not now use spears. The use of steel points doubtless goes back to colonial times and the Kamarakotos have no memory of their
[325] introduction, saying that they have "always" had them. They are made mostly from pieces of old machete blades, worked cold with a file or on stones. Hot working of iron is unknown.

411

Fig. 17 — Kamarakoto Blowgun and Dart.
A, oblique view of proximal end of blowgun with mouthpiece. B, end view of distal end showing the two fitted tubes. C, typical dart ready for use, with curare (black) on tip.

The favorite weapon is the blowgun, kurai' (Fig. 17A, B), but it is more expensive to the Indians and is therefore not as common as the bow, which can be entirely made at home. The blowgun is made of two wooden tubes, the inner one (sanwoto) perfectly straight and with a continuous straight bore. This is so weak that it bends when supported only at one end and it also splits easily. It is therefore inserted into an outer casing of harder wood (yurwa), which supports the inner tube but cannot be used alone because it is jointed and cannot be prepared with an even bore. The two tubes are carefully selected and

411 prepared so that they fit perfectly and appear to be only a single tube unless
411 examined closely. Only the outer tube can be made from wood available to
439 the Kamarakotos and they therefore have to obtain the inner tube or the blowgun as a whole by trading with the Maquiritares (pabanoton), which makes a blowgun an expensive and treasured object. They do sometimes obtain only
[137] the inner tube by trade and construct the blowgun themselves. These tubes are a major item of trade since they grow only in the Guinau and Maquiritare country whence they are traded over an enormous area.

411 The blowgun as used sometimes consists only of the two fitted tubes, but
[824] generally a mouthpiece is attached. It is made of the hard shell of a palm nut
[322] (probably the awara, but I am not quite sure of this), cut in half, hollowed out,
[237] and pierced, so that it forms a hollow hemisphere with the breach opening of the bore in the middle. It is fastened to the double tube with beeswax. Related tribes often have sights on the tube and the Kamarakotos told me that they also sometimes use sights made of acure teeth, but I did not see any blowguns with sights among them. In fact, from personal experiment, it seems to me at least as easy, perhaps even easier, to aim the blowgun without a sight.[114]

Blowguns are commonly about twice as long as the height of the user. A specimen in my collection is 272 1/2 cm. in length. It is very light and can easily be held steady by the two hands near the mouth end despite its great length. Single-tube and split-tube blowguns, such as occur on the Rio Negro and upper Amazon, are unknown to the Kamarakotos.

[824] The darts (kunwa) (Fig. 17 C), usually about 38 - 40 cm. in length, are made of the ribs of palm leaves, shaved until they are nearly circular in section, 2 to 3 mm. in diameter, and very sharply pointed at one end. Curare,
● [278] kumawara, is applied to about 3 cm. at the pointed end, but the very tip is rubbed clean so that a casual scratch does not inject any poison and the darts are quite safe to handle.

278 Curare is not made by the Kamarakotos, probably because the necessary
411 plant does not grow in this region, and they do not know how it is made. They
[439] obtain it from the Maquiritares in the form of a solid, black or dark-brown, pitch-like substance. They moisten the solid poison with water or, preferably, casave-juice (kumachi)[115] and rub the tips of the darts in this. Since the poison is so dark in color and the darts are light yellow, the presence or absence of poison on them is obvious.

411 The poisoned darts, without further preparation, are carried in a quiver,
415 möiyë, made of basketwork waterproofed with a heavy coating of beeswax,
237 moromba, and with a tight-fitted skin cover, see Fig. 67. The Kamarakotos
[439] sometimes make these and sometimes obtain them, of essentially the same form, from the Maquiritares. A second basket, tsimuiⁿ, uncoated and without a top, is attached to the quiver to carry kapok or ceiba, atsari, see Fig. 67, and jaw of a caribe, or piranha, fish, tsipiraiⁿ, is attached to the top of quiver.

114, 115 [see footnotes on p. 320, category 116 – Analyst]

411 For use, a twist of kapok, atsari-kuma:sa?, about 45-50 mm. in length,
[82] is placed on the dart, leaving about 15 mm. of the blunt end free. The twist is flask-shaped with its greatest diameter nearer the butt end, this diameter being about 12-14 mm., slightly greater than the bore of the blowgun, which is normally about 9-11 mm. The twist of kapok is held in place and in shape by a spiral winding of very fine kurawai fiber. Its function is, of course, to prevent the escape of air around the dart and so to cause the puff of breath to propel it through the tube.

[42] A point on the dart at the posterior end of the poison is placed between two of the sharp teeth of the caribe-jaw and rotated so that it is grooved here and breaks easily.[116] This causes the dart as a whole to break off and drop when it is driven into the prey, leaving the tip with the poison. If a bird is killed and recovered, the tip, called iporosa?, is often saved and stuck into the basketwork inside the top of the quiver, as a sort of tally of trophies.

The blowgun is an excellent weapon. The effort of aiming and firing it is slight, once the simple technique of giving the right puff of breath is acquired, and it is extraordinarily hard-hitting and accurate at moderate ranges. Its effective range is about as great as for bow and arrow and its accuracy is
[23] much greater, both inherently and in the hands of the Indians. The blowgun
● 278 is used almost exclusively for shooting birds. The Indians say that the poison
411 is not fatal to cold-blooded animals and that while it will kill mammals the amount carried by a blowgun dart is insufficient to kill most game mammals rapidly. The poison is completely harmless when taken by mouth and the small amount in a bird killed with it has no effect whatever. For that matter although a large amount would doubtless kill a man, the Indians say that a blowgun dart cannot, by its poisonous action, permanently harm a human being and that
[171] poison was never used in warfare or for executions. This is confirmed by the trustworthy accounts of travelers in other parts of South America and attacks with blowguns by Indians, or murders committed with them, are mere figments of the fiction-writers' imagination.

411 Farabee says that the Makuchis usually wind the outside of the gun with bark or lianas fastened with pitch and Roth also mentions the occasional use of elaborate wrappings. The Kamarakotos never do this. Koch-Grünberg says that the use of the blowgun requires extraordinary skill and no little strength, but this was not our experience. My wife, who is not unusually muscular and can hardly sight a high-powered rifle, was able to handle a blowgun with ease and we both acquired fair accuracy and considerable range with it after ten or twenty practice shots. It is, in fact, an extraordinarily easy weapon to use well, more so than any firearm, and the usual expressions of amazement at the ability of the Indians with the blowgun seem to me to involve extravagant exaggeration.

224 Ground game is usually stalked or run with dogs and killed with an im-
600 provised club, an arrow, or a shotgun. We did not see dogs hunting, but those

116 A [see footnote on p. 320, category 116 – Analyst]

237 pleasant event. The small number that accumulate would suggest that the event
211 is very rare indeed, but not all jaws are saved.

411 111. A member of our party easily broke one in discovering this fact.

112. It should be mentioned that these names apply primarily to the point, and only secondarily to the whole arrow.

[114] 113. Koch-Grünberg says that he did not see the supalari among the Taurepanes, but they do have it and the name ("zipõla:li") is given and correctly defined in his vocabulary.

114. Farabee says that these teeth are not sights but indicate the side to be held up. With the Kamarakoto blowgun, at least, it makes no difference which side is held up.

411 115. This is the same juice that the Indians put in their stews and is not
228 poisonous per se. The Indians believe that it adds to the efficacy of the curare, but I do not know whether this is really true. The curare is certainly quite effective without it.

411 116. At least among the Kamarakotos the almost universal statement
239 that this fish jaw is carried for the purpose of sharpening the darts is untrue.
412 Indeed sharpening a prepared dart would remove some or all of the poison and render the dart ineffectual. They must be sharpened before poisoning and before placing in the quiver so that the carrying of a jaw with the quiver cannot be for this purpose.

231 117. Koch-Grünberg mentions how abundant dogs are among the
171 Maquiritares and that they are assertive and mean-tempered and good hunting dogs, which agrees with their fame among the Kamarakotos and emphasizes their distinction from the Kamarakotos' own dogs.

227 118. The only specimen with which the Indians could be persuaded to part was made in the Gran Sabana, but it is identical with those of Kamarakoto manufacture.

226 119. Koch-Grünberg identifies the ing' of the Taurepanes as Lonchocarpus
824 densiflorus, but the Kamarakoto ing) can hardly be that species if Pittier's description of it is correct. It is more likely that aya, which Koch-Grünberg
[114] identifies as Clibadium, is Lonchocarpus. The classification or identification of the various fish poisons appears to be in a chaotic condition and research on